TL6702

MEMORANDUM

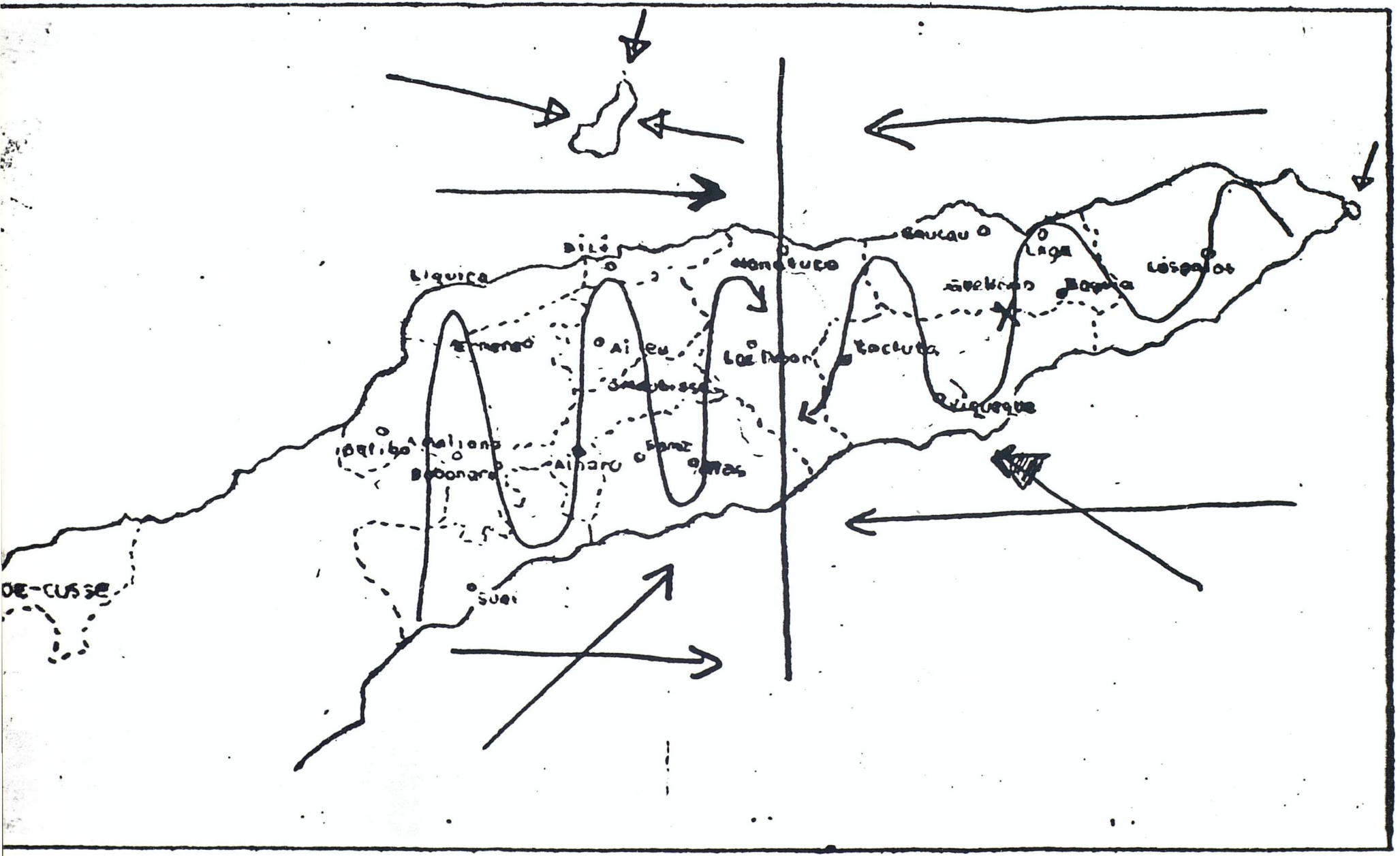
EAST TIMOR

1. In accordance with an instruction of the Military Commander (General Radjagagak) all over East Timor practically all men between 15 - 50 years have to join the army in its effort to chase the Fretelin (and the families with them) hiding in the mountains and the forest more particularly in the surroundings of Mt. Matebian. The operation, called "Operasi Keamanan" (Operation Security), is carried out with the intention to wipe out all Fretelin by displaging them from their hiding places and forcing them to keep moving from one place to another. The objective of the operation is to push the Fretelin from the eastern and western districts to the district of Manatuto in the middle of East Timor, where they will be rounded up by the army. The tactics of the operation are derived from the traditional volunteer service for combatting banditry in a village. It is called "pagar betis", fence of skin bones or fence of legs.
The military mixed with the local people form a closed front and constantly move forward and making their presence known by shouting. Some Fretelin have been arrested, some smashed through the fence of legs. Some Fretelin and some Indonesian military were killed.
The action is supposed to be completed at the middle of September. Success or failure will be decisive for the position and career of the Commander.

2. The central army command have shipped supplies for the people participating in the action. But many cases, depending on the local commander, the supplies are manipulated, so that the men in action must be supplied by the women in the villages. If they are too far away from their villages (sometimes one hundred kilometers) they eat everything they can get in the woods or in the gardens of the villages they pass through. Many of these men get sick and some die from malnutrition and hunger. The sick are permitted to go back to their villages. More than often they have to seek for replacements.
People are scared to death. They keep silent, but they increasingly dislike and hate their lot.

3. As the raining season is starting in October/November, September - October is the time to prepare (dig up) the land for planting of the corn. However, the villages are deprived of their normal labour force, the men. If they come back in the middle of September many of them will be too weak to work.
This will be very detrimental as it may bring about another famine towards the end of this year or the beginning of next year. Since the International Commission of the Red Cross and CRS have closed down their food/medecine programmes, the Apostolic Administrator and a number of priests have appeals to LPPS to raise funds for a sybsequent emergency programme.
LPPS is now gathering more detailed information in order to come to a decision about future action. Naturally, we would prefer to ship agricultural t and seedlings, but we doubt whether that will be of any help in the current situation.

Note : All the relatives of the Fretelin are presently rounded up by the military. By trucks and by boats they are transported to Atauro and two another small island.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